

# EUGENE CITY COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

September 20, 2007



## City of Eugene

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### AROUND THE CITY

#### **Accessible Pedestrian Signals Now Available at 32 Eugene Intersections**

A project to install accessible pedestrian signals (APS) at 25 intersections throughout Eugene has been substantially completed. EC Co. of Albany was the general contractor on the \$250,000 project. Funding included \$60,000 from Community Development Block Grants and \$190,000 from the General Fund. The project was managed by the Eugene Public Works Department in cooperation with the Human Rights Program.

Accessible pedestrian signals provide audible and tactile cues to assist pedestrians, especially those with visual disabilities, in making safer decisions when using intersection crosswalks. APS emit a continuous beeping locator tone that helps users find the button that activates the walk signal. When the walk signal is on, a recorded voice tells the user that the walk light is on and then a backwards countdown alerts the user to how many more seconds the walk light will remain on.

Completion of the current project brings the total intersections with APS to 32. The first accessible pedestrian signal in Eugene was installed in 2004 at 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Hilyard Street. In February 2006, the Public Works Department implemented a policy that requires APS to be included at all newly installed traffic signals with walk sign push buttons that activate the walk signal cycle.



There are still 120 signalized intersections in Eugene that are eligible for APS equipment but do not have APS installed. To address that need, the City has made an ongoing commitment to spend at least \$65,000 each fiscal year on APS installations. The City of Eugene Human Rights Commission Accessibility Committee prioritizes the need for APS at eligible intersections. Community members may request APS at specific intersections by calling 682-5177 or sending email to [hrc@ci.eugene.or.us](mailto:hrc@ci.eugene.or.us). A list of all APS-equipped intersections is available on the City's web site (click on Human Rights Program > Current Activities). For more information, contact Human Rights Program Specialist Karen Hyatt at 682-5177 or Public Works APS Project Manager Steve Gallup at 682-4960.

### **South Ridgeline Habitat Study Community Task Group Gets Underway**

The Planning and Development Department is continuing its innovative citizen engagement process in the South Ridgeline Habitat Study (SRHS) with the kick-off of the SRHS Community Task Group. Each of the nine members of the group represents a key area of community interest: conservation, business/development, recreation, residential homeowners, or member-at-large. The group is working collaboratively with staff and a professional facilitator to develop criteria for identifying habitat sites for conservation and to identify what type of conservation measures will be applied. The task group will review and incorporate citizen input collected at six facilitated community meetings held in each of the affected neighborhoods. The collaboratively developed proposal will be presented in a public workshop this winter to incorporate additional feedback from the general community before being packaged for formal review by the Planning Commission next spring.

The SRHS Final Inventory and Assessment Report has been submitted to the City by Salix Associates, after citizen comments on the draft report were reviewed and addressed by the consultant and staff. The final report is now available on the project website: [www.EugeneNR.org](http://www.EugeneNR.org). For more information about the final report or the citizen task group, please contact Neil Björklund, at 682-5507 or via email at [neil.h.bjorklund@ci.eugene.or.us](mailto:neil.h.bjorklund@ci.eugene.or.us).

### **Campbell Center Event Kicks Off 'Year of Caring and Sharing'**

The Campbell Community Center Care and Share Team's inaugural BBQ and Silent Auction held on Friday, September 7, raised \$2,000 for senior services. The event was a kick-off for "The Year of Caring and Sharing", a program coordinated by Campbell Center volunteers to make a difference in the lives of seniors in Eugene.

Forty guests attended the event, enjoying dinner, music, silent auction and raffle items donated by generous members of the business community. The next "Caring and Sharing" event will be Campbell Center's Annual Holiday Bazaar and Silent Auction on Saturday, November 17. Mark your calendars to join us! For more information, contact Yvaughn Tompkins, 682-6315.

### **Planning Commission Selects Minor Code Amendment Topics**

On August 29, 2007, the City of Eugene Planning Commission held its latest meeting on the Minor Code Amendment process. Public open houses and workshops have been held over the last several months asking community members how they think the land use code can be further improved and subsequently, how best to prioritize the more than 200 suggested amendments that have been received. The purpose of this latest meeting was to develop a manageable list of code amendments which would move forward in this process.

Over the last few months, the Planning Commission, project team, and community members devoted substantial effort in prioritizing this library of suggested amendments. This effort ultimately proved very productive in guiding the Planning Commission's selection of 20 potential amendments. These amendments not only reflect the range of public input received, they also incorporate suggestions which the community rated as "high priorities." For example, many amendments address residential development standards such as the definition of building height, maximum density, lot dimensions, flag and alley access lots, multi-family parking requirements and open space. Such suggestions are representative of the strong involvement of the neighborhoods in this process.

Following a project update with the City Council on October 10, 2007, the project team will prepare more in-depth evaluations of each amendment for review by the planning commission later this fall. For more details on the list of potential amendments and other supporting information, please visit the webpage at [www.eugene-or.gov/codeamendments](http://www.eugene-or.gov/codeamendments), or contact Steve Nystrom, project manager, at 541-682-8385 or [steven.a.nystrom@ci.eugene.or.us](mailto:steven.a.nystrom@ci.eugene.or.us).

### **Local Efforts Help Slow Worsening Problems of Traffic Congestion**

Even though traffic congestion is on the rise in Eugene, this metropolitan area continues to have fewer traffic delays than similar-size urban areas in the U.S., according to a report released Tuesday by the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI).

Across the country, traffic congestion is creating a \$78 billion annual drain on the U.S. economy in the form of 4.2 billion lost hours and 2.9 billion gallons of wasted fuel, TTI's *2007 Urban Mobility Report* found.

The report, which is based on 2005 data, concluded that traffic congestion is worsening in all of the 437 urban areas studied.

Not surprisingly, the Los Angeles area ranked number 1 in traffic congestion, with the average LA driver stuck in traffic for a whopping 72 hours a year and wasting 57 gallons of fuel a year. By contrast, the Eugene-Springfield area ranked 72<sup>nd</sup> in the report, with the typical Eugene-area motorist spending an average of 14 hours a year and losing 8 gallons of fuel due to congested traffic. The Salem area had a very similar ranking. Portland, the third metro area studied in Oregon, ranked 33<sup>rd</sup> for annual delay per traveler.

Traffic congestion has increased over time in this area. During peak travel hours, the average local driver in 1982 lost about 6 hours a year due to congestion. That figure increased slightly to 7 hours in 1995 before doubling to 14 hours in 2005. Overall, traffic delays in this area in 2005 amounted to more than 1.7 million lost hours and more than 1 million gallons of wasted fuel. TTI calculated the economic impact of congestion in the Eugene area in 2005 at \$32 million.

Despite the growing problem of congestion, the Eugene area fared better than average for urban areas with populations less than 500,000. For example, the 14 hours a year spent stuck in traffic in this area compares to a national average of 17 hours in similar-size communities, while the total estimated annual cost of congestion in the Eugene area at \$32 million is significantly less than the \$56 million average for small American cities.

Among the factors that help relieve congestion in this area: extensive on- and off-street bicycle and pedestrian facilities that actively encourage walking and biking as alternatives to driving a single-occupancy vehicle, a well-developed mass transit system, mixed-use (nodal) development designed to decrease the number of vehicle miles traveled per capita, and ongoing efforts to improve the existing transportation system. For more information, contact Gary McNeel, Public Works transportation analyst, at 682-8451.

#### **New Banners Salute Hult 25 Celebrations**



In celebration of Hult 25, new banners will be hung at the Hult Center turnouts on 6th and 7th Avenues just prior to the big Celebrating Hult 25 weekend, on Friday, September 28.

A total of 20 banners, featuring two attractive designs with the Celebrating Hult 25 theme will add to the festive look of the building. Special lighting features will illuminate the interior and exterior.

The bright banners will be installed on the light poles and will be displayed for the duration of the Hult 25 season, through May 2008. At that time, they will be replaced with Eugene 08 banners, which are currently in production. It is expected that the Eugene 08 banners will be displayed through the middle of July 2008. For further information, please contact Laura Niles, 682-2697.

#### **Portable Assisted Listening System Available Through Adaptive Recreation**

The Library, Recreation and Cultural Services Department is now making a truly portable Tour Guide Assisted Listening System available to City staff. The FM system allows people who are hearing impaired or deaf to hear, using their own hearing aides or special headphones.

Unlike the FM systems installed in designated meeting rooms around the City, however, the portable system doesn't require a sound system to function. Presenters, speakers, or program leaders simply speak into a battery powered transmitter and microphone attached to a belt clip. As many as eight receivers can be used simultaneously to hear the signal in areas without an installed assisted listening system, or even out of doors, in places such as parks, trails, and vehicles.

The new system is currently housed with Adaptive Recreation Services and is available to City staff and departments upon request. To inquire about availability and equipment check-out procedures, contact the Hilyard Community Center at 682-5311. For other information, contact Andy Fernandez, 682-6306.

### **Planning Division Moving Forward on Infill and Opportunity Siting**

Things are happening in the Planning Division regarding the Infill Compatibility Standards (ICS) and Opportunity Siting (OS) projects. Both are high priority work items initiated by the City Council to refine local means of managing growth, consistent with the Growth Management Study policies. The goal of the ICS project is the adoption of compatibility standards for new development in established areas. The OS project aims to establish a process for siting dense housing in ways that are more compatible with the surrounding neighborhoods. The projects each have a web page on the Planning Division website with draft program information and forms for submitting comments. See [www.eugeneplanning.org](http://www.eugeneplanning.org) > Opportunity Siting and [www.eugeneplanning.org](http://www.eugeneplanning.org) > Infill Compatibility.

Over the spring and summer, Planning and Development Department staff met with neighborhood associations and other interested parties to raise awareness about the projects. In early August, staff sent out close to 400 letters to solicit active participation in one or both of the projects. The response has been enthusiastic – over 80 people have indicated a willingness to serve on a task team, working group, as a technical resource, or as general meeting participants.

On October 8, the Planning Division will host a public workshop with the letter respondents and the general public on infill and residential growth issues. The workshop is being designed to:

1. Engage people about the issues, the history of the projects and the potential the projects have for improving local communities.
2. Inform people about the background for the projects and direction received from the City Council and Planning Commission.
3. Connect people with ways to participate where they can be most effective.
4. Establish a structure for the task teams and ancillary working groups.

For more information, contact Terri Harding, senior planner in the Planning Division, at 682-5635 or [terri.l.harding@ci.eugene.or.us](mailto:terri.l.harding@ci.eugene.or.us).

### **Applying for College and Financial Aid: Free Workshop at EPL**

Students and/or parents are invited to a free workshop entitled Applying for College and Financial Aid on Saturday, September 22, 3:00 - 5:00 p.m., at the Eugene Public Library, Downtown.

Participants will receive practical advice from University of Oregon guest experts Tomas Baiza, Office of Admissions, and Paul Carlile, Office of Student Financial Aid and Scholarships. The presentation will offer valuable tips for success in completing a college application, writing an entrance essay, filling out financial aid forms, and more.

In addition, librarian Scott Herron will introduce free electronic resources available through Eugene Public Library including LearningExpress (practice tests and guidance), Foundation Directory Online (scholarships from 77,000+ sources), and Oregon Career Information System (schools and financial aid throughout the U.S.). For more information, call the Eugene Public Library, 682-5450.